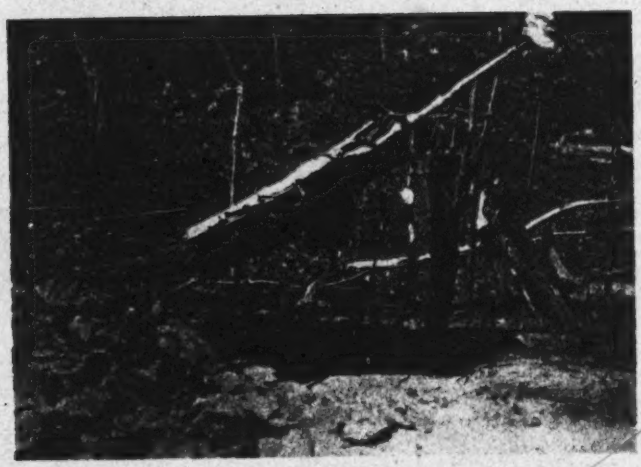
1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Plate XX

343
●841



Rough shelter built for isolation of women at Unawatura Bubula

[facing p.94]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

with the Sinhalese, although, unless for the purpose of barter, they avoid intercourse with strangers. Their wants, however, are so few, that they rarely emerge from their forests[1].

"I need not say that they are very simple and primitive in their habits. The 'wilder sort' have had too little communication with Sinhalese to have acquired the vices of civilization. The few necessities of life which the forest does not supply, such as steel and iron for their arrowheads and axes, and the very scanty clothing which they wear, they obtain by barter, their wax, and honey, elk flesh and ivory, being eagerly sought after by the neighbouring Sinhalese, or 'the ubiquitous Moors'[2]."

There are no puberty ceremonies for either sex, except among certain Veddas who have been much influenced by Tamils or Sinhalese, among whom the girls are isolated for a short time at puberty. Thus although the following ceremony is observed at puberty by the Uniche Veddas, there is no doubt that it has been borrowed from the local Sinhalese who have a similar ceremony, though according to our information the latter people do not break the pot. When a girl becomes unwell for the first time one of her *naena* places a pot of water on her head and goes with her to some place where there is a *nuga* tree. Here the *naena* takes the pot from the girl's head and dashes it on the ground so that the pot breaks. The girl is then secluded in a specially built shelter in which she stays until the end of the period, when she washes and returns to her parents' house. During her seclusion she is attended by a girl, always one of her *naena*, who brings her food in a vessel set apart for this purpose but which is not cooked at a special fire. Among the wilder Veddas no special measures are taken when a woman menstruates, she is allowed to eat the ordinary food, and to sleep in the cave as usual. But among all the village Veddas, and most of those who have mixed at all with the Sinhalese, the menstruous women are strictly isolated, a little shelter being built for them a few paces from the family hut (Plate XX). At Bendiyagalge, where the Henebedda and Kolombedda people were staying at the time of our visit, menstruous women stayed apart at one corner of the cave, they were fed from the pot in

[1] Bailey, *op. cit.* p. 285—286.

[2] Bailey, *op. cit.* p. 291.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

which the food for the community was cooked, but we do not think they would touch it or assist in any way in the cooking. At Omuni a menstruous woman is isolated under a rough shelter where she is waited upon by a younger unmarried sister or cousin who, it was stated, should not herself have attained puberty. During her seclusion she may eat any food cooked at the ordinary fire, but a special platter is kept for her use. The girls who look after her suffer no restrictions. This happens every time a girl or woman menstruates.

Marriage takes place at an early age; it was said that girls sometimes married before puberty, and as we heard of this at Henebedda, Bandaraduwa, and Omuni, we see no reason to doubt the truth of the statement[1]. At Omuni it was pointed out that a certain amount of breast development was necessary before marriage, so that it is probable that connection does not antedate puberty by more than a short time.

With regard to the frequency of such child marriages, we can only say that we never saw any very young girls with babies. Perhaps at the present day prenuptial connection is more common than marriage between the very young, though it is obviously difficult to decide when prenuptial love-making between individuals destined for each other gives place to marriage, among people whose marriages are accompanied with but slight ceremony. It must be remembered that the marriage gift of landed or personal property to a son-in-law, which was formerly customary, is obsolescent at the present day, and this not only makes it more difficult to determine whether marriage has taken place, but probably actually tends to make the exact time of the assumption of the married state less clearly defined.

On account of these considerations we are unable to express any definite opinion as to the frequency of prenuptial connection, the few instances we heard of were between individuals occupying the relationship of *hura* and *naena*, who would in any case marry each other. Thus Kaira of Henebedda and his wife grew up in the same group, and as they had played together as

[1] We are indebted to Mr Frederick Lewis for the information that this is a common practice among Tamils.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

136 The grass in the glades was so tall that it covered us entirely. One's only chance of encountering game lay at the forest margins, or in the infrequent patches of burnt ground, overspread with the tender spicous shoots of which the chital are fond. Parrots and doves broke the stillness of the evening with their crooning. Startled quails whirred from our feet crying vociferous caution to their crouching young, and sometimes we would flush a *pathan kukula*, a species of partridge. But the note that accorded most with the brooding genius of the place, was the mournful, incessant 'ho-ho, ho-ho' of the *botua-kapan*, a cuckoo which, try as we might, we failed to see.

361 231 The next morning, provided with a small langur we shot on the way, we visited the Henebedde Veddas in their homes. Handuna's hut stood at the foot of a densely wooded hill. There were a few cattle about which the Veddas tended for a consideration from the Sinhalese; and, what was even more unexpected, we found here a couple of hens with excellent broods; for, even the Sinhalese of these parts, as we learnt to our cost, kept no fowls. In these pursuits lie the nuclei that bid fair to tie nomadic hunters to fixed abodes.

342 [281 362] Handuna's hut was a long low structure of wattle and bast thatched with straw, and partitioned into three or four dark rooms, occupied by his family and those of his sons-in-law. At one end of the building was an open living-room in which we were entertained with deer skins for seats. Slung from the eaves, at the other end of the hut, was a gourd, the mouth 231 of which was plugged with wax pierced with two small holes, through which bees busily entered and emerged. As I focussed my camera on this interesting example of Vedda apiculture, the enterprising showman naively remarked that a gentleman had once given him a rupee for that picture; but he might have spared the hint for the good it brought him.

343 [84] [171] Standing a little apart from the main hut, was a squat, kennel-like structure for the segregation of women, during their monthly indisposition. This feature is universal among jungle folk, whether Vedda, half-Vedda, Sinhalese, or Tamil. These sheds, barely sufficient for an individual to sit or lie crouched in, are often overgrown by jungle, and only crudely protected with bark-slats or deer skins; they have a fireplace at the open entrance; sometimes they are more hygienically built over trestles. Considering the poor protection they afford, and their nearness to the forest around, it must require some fortitude on the part of those occupying them, especially at night.

252 We now saw the monkey we had brought prepared for food. A slow fire was kindled in the garden; on this the carcase was placed, and turned over until well singed, emitting a most appetising odour. The smooth stone on which Handuna had up to now been seated, and which did service as seat or platter as occasion demanded, was requisitioned; the half-roasted animal was placed on it, disemboweled, and quartered with the blade of an arrow. A dog, that had been awaiting the opportunity, feasted on the offal in full view. The head was severed and split in half, [824 264] the limbs, dismembered, and the trunk broken flat. The various fragments were then put back to roast. When all was ready, dainty morsels were served out to us on broad *kenda** leaves (the usual plates of these 262 people), with the polite request that we must eat first. A fragment of liver done to a turn, and a dainty hand with the charred little fingers

*Macaranga tomentosa.